
Environmental Advisory Council
Tuesday, November 22, 2011

The regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council was held on the above date for the transaction of general business.

EAC members present – R. Nieves, D. Beane, H. Rauenzahn, B. Jennings

Others present – S. Katzenmoyer, D. Hoag

CALL TO ORDER

Harriet Rauenzahn called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Keller from the West Reading EAC and local Sierra chapter was present but did not comment.

Ms. Rauenzahn stated that she invited Mr. Keller to this meeting as the West Reading EAC is new and suggested that the municipalities cooperate as able. The EAC welcomed Mr. Keller and encouraged continued cooperation.

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP

Ms. Hoag stated that the meeting which was to take place was cancelled and a new date has not been chosen. She noted that it will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

BERNHART PARK UPDATE

Ms. Hoag stated that the majority of the work is complete. She stated that a few items must wait for the spring weather and that the parking area is where the majority of the work remains. She stated that a walk through was completed and a punch list created. She noted that the grass may need to be reseeded in the spring because of the wet fall weather. She stated that the dam inspector made positive comments about the remediation.

Ms. Hoag stated that a problem has arisen with eight lots for private development which border the steep slope area. She stated that the City agreed to the remediation plan believing that these lots would have deed restrictions

noting the need for a permanent fence. She stated that the developer is now objecting and that the City will not sign off on completion of the project without the deed restrictions.

Mr. Molteni arrived at this time.

Dr. Jennings questioned why this situation occurred. Ms. Hoag explained that the City requested the deed restriction to prevent children from easily entering the steep slope area that has not been remediated.

Mr. Beane explained that the developer was not a party to the remediation agreement with EPA and that the City cannot sign off on the project until the fence is constructed. He stated that negotiations need to continue on and stated that the deed restriction will notify future owners of the need for a fence.

Dr. Jennings stated that the consequence of this deed restriction is that the property value will be decreased and it will reduce the number of people willing to purchase these parcels.

Mr. Beane stated that this will legally minimize the future risk to the City.

Mr. Molteni stated that it is also the ethical thing for the City to do.

SMART GROWTH ALLIANCE

Mr. Nieves gave a brief background of the Smart Growth Alliance for Mr. Keller.

Mr. Nieves explained that the Alliance is looking for recommendations of recognition to businesses and municipalities who represent smart growth. He explained that the recommendations could be for green projects, LEED buildings, etc.

Mr. Beane questioned if the recommendation needed to be a project completed within the last calendar year. Mr. Nieves stated that no timeline was specified.

Mr. Beane suggested nominating Evergreen Community Power for their significant investment in alternative energy. Mr. Nieves stated that he will forward this suggestion and requested additional recommendations be submitted to him via email.

READING ELECTRIC RENEWABLES PRESENTATION

Ms. Rauenzahn introduced Jim Kurtz, of Reading Electric Renewables.

Mr. Kurtz stated that the solar systems introduced in the 1970's were not ready for mass use. He stated that current systems are much better suited for use and that tax credits are available to homeowners who switch to solar systems. He stated that Reading Electric Renewables works with businesses and homeowners and gives a 25 year warranty on its work. He stated that there are not large jumps in technology improvements to the systems so it is a good long-term investment.

Mr. Kurtz explained that China is a leader in producing the solar panels and that this has reduced the cost of installing solar systems. He stated that the United States provides the materials to manufacture the panels and that 75%-80% of the cost of the system supports the US economy.

Mr. Kurtz distributed a handout showing the tax credit programs available to homeowners and for profit businesses.

Ms. Rauenzahn questioned why energy use should be converted to solar. Mr. Kurtz stated that 50% more electricity will be required as demand of electric items increases. He stated that solar is a clean and environmentally friendly way to increase electric production. He suggested that solar, wind and gas systems be used.

Dr. Jennings questioned if the fossil fuel companies are involved in solar. Mr. Kurtz stated that they are beginning to dabble in the issue but that they are not industry leaders.

Ms. Rauenzahn questioned Mr. Kurtz's view of the Marcellus Shale issue. Mr. Kurtz stated that he is not an expert in this area but suggested that the extraction be deferred until controls are in place. He noted the need for strong regulation.

Ms. Rauenzahn stated that Mr. Kurtz is involved with Vaughn Spencer's Green Team. Mr. Kurtz stated that the committee is interested in sustainability. He stated that some sustainability issues can create City jobs.

Mr. Kurtz stated that he has also made a presentation to the Reading School Board.

Mr. Molteni expressed the belief that the government should take a lead on sustainability issues but not be aggressive. He noted the need for Reading to attract industry. Mr. Kurtz stated that government can create the policies and environment to attract industry.

Mr. Beane stated that the housing complex at 11th & Penn has completed a solar retrofit.

Mr. Kurtz described his vision of community solar panels with its own grid. He stated that this is currently not allowed in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Beane stated that local officials are beginning to recognize that local laws are not alternate energy friendly.

Dr. Jennings suggested members research the solar mosaic in Oakland, CA. Mr. Molteni suggested that they also look at the Syracuse, NY model.

Mr. Kurtz thanked the EAC for the opportunity to speak to the EAC and noted the need to educate the public on the solar energy issue.

DELTA AVE

Mr. Nieves stated that he is following up on this issue after learning about it at a community meeting. Ms. Hoag explained that there have been no reports of flooding on Delta Ave. She suggested residents call the Citizens Services Center to report future problems.

CEMETERY LANE

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained that she has had no further follow up from Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz.

OTHER

Ms. Rauenzahn requested Ms. Katzenmoyer make two copies of agenda packets for future meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

The next meeting of the Environmental Advisory Council will be held on Wednesday, December 28 at 5:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted by
Shelly Katzenmoyer
Deputy City Clerk